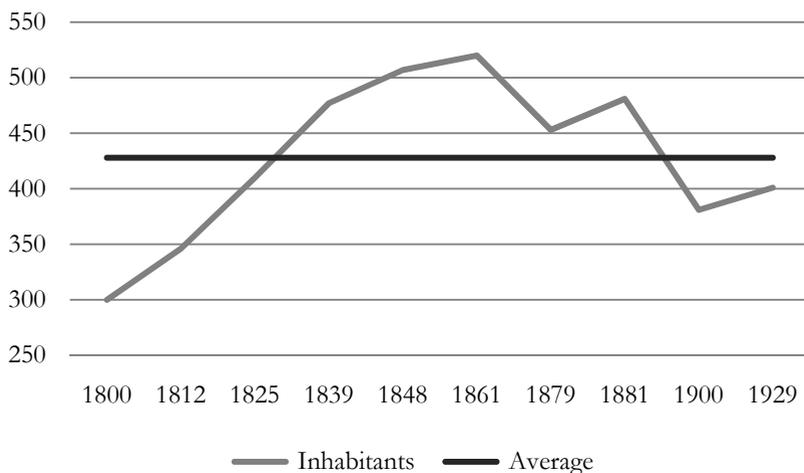


America had been affected by German immigrants in many ways until the 20th century. In almost 100 years between 1815 and 1914, some seven million Germans came to America. It is assumed that every sixth American can trace his or her roots back to Germany. The immigrants of the first and second generation attached importance to integration in their new home country. Their descendants, however, developed a new awareness of their German roots. In many cases, these roots can be traced back to the Heuberg. From Renquishausen there were at least 102 persons known by name, who set out for the crossing of the Atlantic Ocean to the New World. Taken into consideration that the town's average population was 428 persons, 24% of the inhabitants emigrated between 1847 and 1929. What were the reasons that forced nearly every fourth inhabitant of Renquishausen to leave his or her hometown, to separate from family and friends and to dare the expensive and risky journey into an uncertain future?

The main motive for emigration from the Heuberg to America was the economic hardship, which besides the geological condition based mainly on hailstorms and crop failures as well as on thereof resulting famines. In 1839, the village Renquishausen was described in the report of Tuttlingen County as follows: *“Renquishausen, located one hour North of Kolbingen on the lonesome and rough plane, which is called Heuberg, is a catholic village of 77 buildings and 477 inhabitants, who own 360 pieces of livestock and a boundary of 2,127 morgen [former measure of land equals to about 1,650 acres].”* Another source of 1840 mentions the Heuberg as *“one of the most uneconomic corner of the Black Forest, which is known as Swabia's Siberia, where farmers assiduously work their stony soil six days a week.”* The Wuerttemberg Universal Encyclopedia of 1843 presented the Heuberg in the following way: *“The soil is utmost bad, the complete region stony and bleak, and the villages, which are scattered on it belong to the most dreary in Wuerttemberg.”*

Population development in Renquishausen between 1800 and 1929



Furthermore, an official report of the ethical and economic conditions in Renquishausen as of 1832 determined a lack of rewarding income. In the following years, the economic situation changed steadily for the worse. The district authority’s description analyzed the situation as follows: *“The former better income state was based on the silk spinning, which was strongly carried out by male and female workers and provided for nourishing earnings. After this craft ran out of business, no other trade replaced it.”*

The partition of property was common for Renquishausen families when it came to inheritance. Parents appointed all of their children as heirs for their property. This kind of heritage had a lot of social implications. On one hand, it advanced certain equality between women and men, because each child was equally entitled to inherit. Furthermore, an only child of poor parents could have inherited more than many children of a rich family. As another result, fields became smaller and smaller, the big properties of the ancestors

diminished with every generation in Renquishausen. Already in the 17th century there were many medium and small rural classes. The partition of property led to the result that smaller and smallest lots increased over generations and there was not enough agricultural area to support the families.

Renquishausen was affected by large-scale emigration for the first time from 1851 until 1854. The parish chronicle of Kolbingen mentioned: *“The difficult years of 1846/47, which were perceptible all over the country, followed by the riots and revolution in 1847/48 and the year of the hailstorm 1852, caused that the people on the Heuberg started to participate in the emigration wave to the land of freedom and plenty – the North American States.”* All emigrants left their home because of economic reasons and hoped for better conditions regarding work, future and the possibility to gain prosperity. Not only reports of already emigrated Heuberg people made America appealing but also cheap and fertile land, e.g. the plains beyond the Mississippi River, where the brothers Roman and Ivo Mattes¹ from Renquishausen settled down with their families. Many families did not come to the New World without money; some of them were quite well off after they sold their old home’s property.

Already in 1847, Regina Schwanz née Stehle², a native of Renquishausen, emigrated from Schwenningen on the Heuberg to America. In April 1851, the first two verifiable Renquishausen inhabitants, who planned to leave their hometown and emigrate to America, appeared at the municipal council and the following was recorded in writing: *“Josef Mueller, single, 28 years old, and Sophron Mattes, single, 26 years old, bring forward, that they are willing to go to America and ask for the issue of a passport. We witness to the district authority, that they are citizens of*

¹ see page 80ff.

² see page 66ff.

Renquishausen and that there is no obstacle for a possible return as well as for the issue of a passport for Josef Mueller and Sophron Mattes.”

By the late 19th century, America had become a leading global industrial power, building on new technologies, an expanding railroad network, and abundant natural resources such as coal, timber, oil and farmland. European immigrants provided the labor base for the expansion of industry and agriculture and provided the population base for most of fast-growing urban America. This development implied the chance for many newcomers to make their dream of a better life come true. From 1881, emigration from the Heuberg assumed vast proportions than never before. Within ten years, 52 persons from Renquishausen left home for the New World.

Most immigrants from Renquishausen settled in the state of New York, mainly in the city of Syracuse. Pennsylvania was the second state, where many Renquishausen people located, particularly in the city of Altoona. Other immigrants found their new home in the Midwest.

In the 1910s and 1920s there was just once more a short flare-up of emigration from Renquishausen to America. 15 persons turned their back on the Heuberg and crossed the Atlantic Ocean. During and directly after World War I emigration ground to a halt. The main cause for the last emigration wave was inflation, as well as large-scale unemployment in the postwar period of the 1920s. The emigration of complete families came almost to an end and only single persons, women and men, left their home alone to find their luck in the New World. Anna Maria Straub³ was the last emigrant from Renquishausen to America, when she left her hometown in May 1929.

³ see page 276ff.